

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY

SELECT COMMITTEE

05/02/2019 at 6.00 pm



Present: Councillors Curley, Davis, Harkness, Phythian and Stretton (Vice-Chair)

Also present: Rev. Jean Hurlston, Education Cooptee

In Attendance:

Anne Ryans	Director of Finance
Mark Stenson	Head of Corporate Governance
Andrew Sutherland	Director of Education and Early Years
Adrian Calvert	Education Partnership Leader
Fabiola Fuschi	Constitutional Services Officer

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ahmad. Councillor Stretton chaired the meeting.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

5 **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Value for Money Select Committee meeting held on 13th December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

6 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD TO NOTE**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 27th November 2018 be noted.

7 **POSITION STATEMENT ON EDUCATION STANDARDS 2018**

Consideration was given to a report of the Education Partnership Leader which sought to inform the Select Committee of the position statement on education standards in Oldham in 2018, as indicated by outcomes across key stages and in Ofsted inspections. The information pertained to all schools and Academies in Oldham.

Members were informed that, overall, key educational outcomes had improved in most areas in 2018. However, most standards remained below the national average levels. Improvements had been seen in Key Stage 2 assessments, as the percentage of Oldham pupils achieving the National Standards for Reading, Writing and Maths had increased by 6% from 2017 to 2018; this result had been better than the national increase of 3%. At Key

Stage 4, Oldham pupils, on average, had not improved their attainment from 2017 to 2018. However, some secondary schools had some excellent performances. With regards to Post 16 outcomes, this measure continued to be above the national average. Participation rate of year 11 pupils moving to education, employment or training had decreased slightly compared to 2017. However, it remained higher than in 2016. Participation data for Looked After Children was very positive, with 9.6% better than in 2016. The percentage of young people who were Not in Employment, Education or Training (i.e.: NEET) had also increased, but it remained lower than in 2016.

Ofsted outcomes were also reported. The general trend in primary sector was positive. Secondary schools had been inconsistent in performance when compared to England average. However, recent trends showed a good level of improvement.

The Select Committee sought and received clarification / commented on the following points:

- Measures to address issues (including food poverty and children's health and wellbeing) and to achieve priorities
 - It was explained that, through the Opportunity Area Programme, Oldham Council had formed a local partnership with early years providers, schools, colleges, businesses and charities to ensure that all children and young people had the opportunity to reach their full potential. 31 schools had been identified and support would be provided to their leadership and curricula. Some of these schools had English as an additional language; extra training would be put in place to ensure that schools had the time to embed in their day to day work. The Council had engaged students over the summer break via the Holiday Hunger scheme. Breakfast Clubs took place and food was being provided for children and, sometimes, also for parents. This was an opportunity to work closely with families. Measures were also in place to support children and young people with their mental wellbeing.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

8

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BUDGET AMENDMENT PROPOSALS 2019/20

The Select Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Governance which outlined the Liberal Democrats' suggested amendments to the Administration's Budget Proposals for 2019/20. The report also offered some forward-looking proposals to achieve savings in future years. Investment proposals for £1.019m were also outlined in the document. These would be offset by the savings identified in 2019/20.

The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Resources, accompanied by the Head of Corporate Governance, presented the proposals and addressed the enquiries of the Select

Committee. The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group also commended the work of the Finance Team who provided assistance with the preparation of the budget.



It was explained that the Liberal Democrats were aware of the scale of financial challenge the Council was facing and the difficult choices that needed to be made to ensure a balanced budget could be presented to Council.

The Select Committee examined in detail the saving proposals.

OPP-BR1-001 Additional Vacancy Management factor to achieve greater efficiency including limiting the present use of agency staff and consultants – This suggestion extended the proposal of the Administration’s target of 1.5% by a further 1% to a total of 2.5%. Members agreed that it would be prudent to see first the outcome of the implementation of the Administration’s proposal before making a further increase. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this saving proposal.

OPP-BR1-102 Reduction in the number of Councillors from 60 to 40 and a review of the Electoral Cycle – Members agreed that no savings would be achieved within financial year 2019/20. Furthermore, the Council would have to apply to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for this option to be investigated. There would be no certainty that the outcome of this process would meet the request. It was also noted that this proposal would have a negative impact on the effectiveness of the work done by Councillors in their wards. For the above reasons, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-103 Reduction in the General Training Budget agreed in 2018/19 to be made permanent – This was a proposal to make the Administration’s “one off” reduction for 2018/19 permanent. The Select Committee felt that, given the pressure that members of staff sustained currently, training allowed personnel to be flexible, and effective and it also safeguarded their professions. Furthermore, it was noted that this could have an impact on members of staff’s morale. It also affected staff retention. For the above reasons, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-104 Reduced Sickness Absence through more robust absence management procedures – It was explained that this proposal would achieve £13,000 savings via increased intervention at earlier stages including signs and symptoms of future potential absence. The Select Committee felt that systems and process were already in place to reduce sickness absence. Furthermore, it was noted that a feature of a good employer was to have a good sickness scheme to value its employees. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-105 Review of car allowance as previously promised to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage – Considering that consultation with Trade Unions and individuals would need to take place before staff terms and conditions could be amended, the Select Committee was minded to recommend that the proposal was considered in 2019/20 as part of a wider review of the reward and recognition package, with no guarantee that the outcome would be acceptance of this proposal.

OPP-BR1-106 Reduce the subsidisation of Trade Union support provided by the Council following a reduction in membership – It was noted that there was no supporting evidence for this saving proposal. In addition to this, it was acknowledged that Trade Union Representatives needed to have time to represent and to work for their members. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-107 Redesign of Communications and Marketing – This saving proposal looked at generating £0.150m in 2019/20 through ceasing the publication of the Borough Life Magazine and the Staff Matters newsletter together with other measures such as halting staff conferences. It was explained that, as the residents became more IT literate, there was less need to have Council's publications in paper copies and the savings generated by this proposal could be invested in essential services. The Select Committee felt that, as a review of Communications and Marketing services was already ongoing, it would be practical to wait for its outcome before considering this saving proposal. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-108 Additional Bus Lane Enforcement to ensure consistency of provision within the Council controlled area - It was explained that this saving proposal would add a further lane (i.e.: Rochdale Road Oldham) to the additional five bus lane enforcement routes which were part of the Administration's budget reduction proposals. The Select Committee was favourable to the proposal but it considered practical to wait for the other bus lane enforcement routes to become embedded first. The Select Committee was minded to consider this proposal once the current Administration proposals were bedded in and shown to be effective.

OPP-BR1-109 Review of existing dimming regime – It was explained that there were several areas in Oldham where this measure could be implemented and the savings would be significant. The Select Committee felt that this was an estimated saving. Dimming schemes had been implemented by the Administration recently and it was felt that these should be evaluated before any further steps were taken. The Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-110 Reduce in travel budgets to ensure most efficient method of transport is used for essential Council

business – It was explained that this proposal had stemmed from a Freedom of Information Act request concerning the number of flights purchased by Oldham Council from January 2015 until the end of March 2018. A significant number of these flights were funded by external sources and some costs were incurred by the general fund. Management were already reviewing this process to ensure that the most economic form of travel was pursued. The Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-111 Generating additional income through increased renting out of artworks to other institutions and interested parties subject to security – The Select Committee felt that there was an ongoing investment proposal supported by the Council, the Arts Council and a private investor to change the old library into a heritage centre to allow more of the art collection to be on display. It was also felt that lending out part of the collection would have risk and insurance implications and the proposed savings were not significant to justify the expense and risk associated with the proposal. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

OPP-BR1-112 Charging for leisure courses within Lifelong Learning to reduce the Council subsidy – The Select Committee felt that these courses were essential to fight loneliness and social isolation. Therefore, the Select Committee was not minded to take forward this proposal.

The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group outlined the investment proposals. These would be funded by £1.019m savings identified for 2019/20:

- Additional £5.000m Investment in highways;
- Establishment of an Environmental Task Force (i.e.: £0.500m);
- To provide revenue funds to support the development of a new Crompton Healthcare Centre (i.e.: £0.434m);
- To restore the Administration's proposal to cut funding to Parish Councils and reduce District Executive budgets.

It was agreed that these investment proposals were not affordable as none of the Liberal Democrats' efficiencies outlined for 2019/20 had been endorsed by the Select Committee. However, the Chair recommended that the proposal concerning the new Healthcare Centre in Crompton be pursued via alternative routes and it was suggested that a conversation between appropriate shadow Cabinet members of the Liberal Democrat Group, the Administration and appropriate Officers of the Council should take place to see whether a scheme could emerge as part of the corporate strategy.

The Select Committee acknowledged the importance of resources made available at district and parish level. It was explained that the Administration had come to the view that there would be a review of district working with a reduction in budget and that Parish Councils should not be exempt from cuts

that the national Government had imposed on local authorities' budgets.



Oldham
Council

RESOLVED that the Select Committee recommended to the Cabinet that:

1. The following investment and the saving proposals for 2019/20 as summarised at Appendix A were noted but not recommended with the exception of:
 - a. **OPP-BR1-106 Review of car allowance as previously promised to reduce the amount paid as a lump sum to staff doing zero or minimal mileage** – which the Administration might wish to consider in 2019/20 as part of a wider review of the reward and recognition package, with no guarantee that the outcome would be acceptance of this proposal;
 - b. **OPP-BR1-108 Additional Bus Lane Enforcement to ensure consistency of provision within the Council controlled area** – which the Administration might wish to consider once the current Administration bus lane proposals were bedded in and shown to be effective;
2. The proposal concerning the new Healthcare Centre in Crompton be pursued via alternative routes such as a conversation between the members of the Liberal Democrat Group and Officers of the Council to see whether a scheme could emerge as part of the corporate strategy;
3. An in depth review of recycling rates within the borough be undertaken by the Select Committee with a view to identifying suggested improvements which would have the long term impact of potentially reducing the levy to support future budgets. This was agreed as an agenda item for a future meeting of the Select Committee.

9 **WORK PROGRAMME 2018/19**

RESOLVED that the work programme for 2018/19 be noted.

10 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

RESOLVED that the date and time of the next meeting, Thursday 21st March 2019 at 6 p.m., be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm